Thomas FitzMaurice (c. 1145–c. 1213)

Origin and Family

Born c. 1145.[7] Died 1213.[3]

Father: Maurice FitzGerald (c. 1105–c. 1176)
Mother: Alice de Montgomery
Spouse: Ellinor de Marisco, also known as Sabina, daughter of Geoffrey de Marisco, Justiciar of Ireland. Some records show that Sabina and Ellinor were two different women, but that is not the case according to Burke's Peerage and other sources.[4]

Children:[1]

1. John FitzThomas (c. 1195–1261)
2. Maurice FitzThomas

Thomas FitzMaurice is often referred to as Thomas FitzMaurice FitzGerald to reinforce his FitzGerald connection. Many sources say he was born in Wexford, Ireland, but since his father Maurice FitzGerald did not invade Ireland until 1169, it is more likely he was born and raised in Wales, probably at Llanstephen in Carmarthen, Wales. He was the third son of Maurice FitzGerald and is described in Burke's Peerage as "Lord of Connello, Co. Limerick. d. A.D. 1213. Ancestor of the Fitzgeralds, the Earls of Desmond, the White Knight, the Knight of Glin, the Knight of Kerry, the FitzMaurice Lords of Kerry, etc."[3]

Thomas is the ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, while his brother Maurice is the ancestor of the Earls of Kildare. Descendants of Thomas FitzMaurice and the Desmond line include John FitzGerald Kennedy. As was the case in Wales, permanent surnames were not established at the time, and once they were set, the FitzGerald surname seems to have been retroactively applied to Thomas and some of his descendants. Thomas had a nephew by the name Thomas FitzGerald, who was referred to in his time as "Thomas the Great". These two are often confused in the historical record.

Occupation and Property

Shanid Castle

Thomas may have joined his father in the invasion of Ireland in 1169, but there is no record of him participating.[3] He did not gain property through inheritance, but rather became a lord through marriage to Ellinor. Thomas acquired the castle at Shanid and the feudal lordship of Connello through this marriage in 1197.

Shanid castle is an imposing tower castle. Thomas is often credited with the building of the castle but there are strong indications it was there before his time. It is high on a hill with a moat some 35 feet deep, and with circular walls that were 10 feet thick. Surrounding the central tower are more motte and bailey defenses, ditches and banks. It was an impressive Geraldine stronghold for over 400 years.[5]

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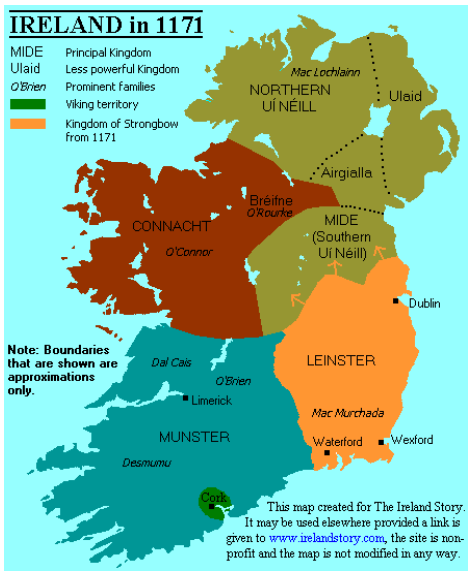

Thomas FitzMaurice and other Norman Lords dramatically changed the face of inland Ireland, which previously had been entirely pastoral. Vastly outnumbered by the natives, the Normans congregated in small communities, which gradually evolved into towns, typically centered around a castle and/or church. Indeed, although the coastal towns of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick were established by the Vikings, most inland towns and villages in Ireland were founded by the Normans. In fact, the province of Munster, under the Geraldines, became one of the most French of provinces outside of France itself.[6]

After conquering an area, the Normans typically displaced the Gaelic nobility, or married into it, but the ordinary Irishman was left in possession of his land to herd cattle and till the soil, just as he had been doing under their native chieftains. The Normans introduced the natives to modern and more efficient agricultural practices, which they were required to adopt.

Moreover, the Normans customarily built churches in their towns. Virtually all of the medieval cathedrals in Ireland -- St Patrick's in Dublin, St Mary's in Limerick, St Canice's in Kilkenny -- were the work of the Normans.

The Normans imposed a feudal system substantially identical to that which their ancestors had brought from Normandy to England. They built Dublin Castle and installed a strong central government. They struck coinage for Ireland. They introduced English common law, including the jury system. They appointed Sheriffs. And although it served only the Norman-Anglo colony, an Irish parliament modeled on the English one was created in the late 13th century.[6]

During Thomas's lifetime and for centuries after, the Norman Lords were constantly struggling with both the English and the Irish. "We're English to the Irish and Irish to the English" was their lament. The English Kings desired to weaken the power of the Norman Lords in Ireland. King Henry II, and later King John, demanded fealty and homage. Prince John, brother to King Richard, was made Lord of Ireland in 1177 and came to the country in 1189 to exert his control. When King Richard died in 1199, John took the throne. In the same year, King John received Papal approval and recognition of Ireland as a Kingdom with himself named as its king.

In 1210, John invaded Meath and Ulster and took control of the lands of both Earls. Thomas, together with his father-in-law Geoffrey de Marisco, led a large force from Munster to join King John's army, but no opposition was found and no battles were fought. The King imposed English law in Ireland and reorganized the country's lordships. The following year Thomas took part in the Declaration of Loyalty to King John.

It was costly to pay the fees imposed by the English Monarchs and the Norman Lords. It generally took many battles to extract the payments of crops from the peasant farmers. Over time, the Geraldines became "more Irish than the Irish" and eventually joined in battles against the English.

The long line of descent of the Earls of Desmond at Shanid ended with the murder of the last Earl of Desmond in 1541. In 1641 the ancient Shanid castle was finally burned and destroyed by the English.

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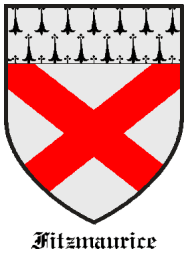

The FitzMaurice Coat of Arms is closely aligned with the FitzGeralds. See "Further Reading" for more information on the Yale Coat of Arms.

End of Life

Thomas FitzMaurice died in 1213.[3] The burial details cannot be found, but he was likely interred within his lordship near Shanid, possibly at a local parish church such as Shanagolden or Robertstown.

Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: FitzMaurice-98
FamilySearch ID: GHBV-HXT
Wikipedia: Thomas FitzMaurice

Further Reading:
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- Wikipedia: Thomas FitzMaurice

References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 5 p. 75

2. John Pierse, Pierse Family History, 1950

3. The Peerage Online: Person Pages 10468 and 10469

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5. Castles of Ireland. Archive.Org Wayback

6. Desmond, Jerry. Desmond's Concise History of Ireland, 1998

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